

Rowan

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Witcher TTRPG Homebrew Collection

"Rowan is a land of stunning contradictions. By summer, its lush river valleys and evergreen yew forests serve as a sun-drenched playground for Nilfgaardian elites. By winter, it is crushed beneath the 'donkey's belly'—a suffocating ceiling of gray clouds that chokes the sky with rain, hail, and snow. Once a powerful, independent merchant republic governed by the wealthy Chiarni, Rowan was broken by imperial tariffs and reduced to an administrative duchy. Today, beneath its polite, punctual society and the sweet scent of its famous mandrake crops, beats the quiet, tamed heart of a realm that remembers when it was a rival to the Great Sun itself."

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Rowan at a Glance

Region Details	
Status:	Imperial Duchy within the Nilfgaardian Empire (formerly a special administrative swyg, a merchant republic, and an absolute monarchy).
Borders:	Duchy of Ymlac (North), Tir Tochair Mountains/Korath Desert (East), Lower Alba (West).
Capital:	Darn Rowan (formerly Chaarowain).
Ruler:	A Rowani Duke/Duchess (Appointed directly by the Imperial Capital).
Language:	Nilfgaardian (Official). A localized Creole and remnants of the dead Rowani tongue survive in rural areas.
Religion:	The Great Sun (Formerly the solar cult of Mithrea).
Primary Exports:	Mandrake (and alchemical mandrake pomace), Rowani Quail, legumes, orchard fruits, and tourism.

The Land & Climate

Geography & Climate: Rowan is entirely landlocked. Its geography is defined by rolling hills and sheltered valleys, crowned by the 800-meter peak of Turcaid

Slieau (Light Blue Mountain). The lifeblood of the region is the Row Awin (Line River) and Lough Airh (Golden Lake). The climate is one of extremes. Summers are oppressively hot and bright, while winters are defined by a unique weather trap where northern mountains block southern cloud fronts, resulting in three brutal phases: Rains, Hail, and Snow.

Natural Resources

Rowan's wealth stems from the soil. It is one of the premier producers of high-quality mandrake on the Continent. It also boasts unique endemic flora, including the calming *fervane*, lowland yew, luciae roses, and the striking golden *sunfern*.

Fauna & Rural Life

Rowan boasts a highly unique, localized ecosystem. The valleys are filled with short-haired dwarf bison, Rowani duikers, the iconic Rowani quail, and domesticated Rowani boars. Wild predators include the timber coyote, the river fox, and the diminutive hillcat. Muspélids and farm foxes are kept as companions.

Urban Centers

Rowan has very few large cities; its population is heavily dispersed among rural villages and sprawling, wealthy estates built into the valleys. The capital, Darn Rowan, serves as the bureaucratic heart, rebuilt from the ashes of the sacked original capital, Chaarowain.

Society & Culture

Rowan possesses a population of approximately **1,000,000 citizens**, making it a relatively small but densely cultured duchy.

Daily Life & Vibe

Despite thorough Nilfgaardianization, Rowan retains a highly distinct social culture. The people are famously punctual, polite, patient, and calm—a demeanor so well-known it spawned the imperial idiom "*to walk Rowan's pace*," meaning to handle business efficiently but without rushing.

Fashion & Appearance

The intense climate dictates fashion: stark whites and light linens during the scorching summers, and heavy black wools during the freezing winters. Physically, ethnic Rowani are distinct. Due to the intense summer sun, they possess soft olive skin and characteristic deep black eyes, paired with light brown or ash-blond hair. Statistically, the average height aligns closely with Lower Alba: roughly **1.75 meters (5'9") for men** and **1.55 meters (5'1") for women**.

Non-Human Relations

Because non-humans were absent from Rowan prior to the Conjunction, the region lacks the deep-seated racial bigotry seen in the North or other imperial provinces. Discrimination is minimal. Non-humans are viewed simply as "foreigners."

- **Gnomes:** The only permanent non-human demographic in the duchy. Having migrated from the Tir Tochair mountains, they eschew typical smithing roles and instead work highly respected jobs as agricultural overseers and bathhouse coordinators.
- **Witchers:** Witchers of the Fox and Viper schools are generally welcomed with wary respect as "foreign blades against foreign beasts," finding steady work protecting the rural villages.

Economy, Law & War

The Economy

Rowan's economy is a powerhouse of primary production and service hospitality. While it exports massive quantities of mandrake, fruit (plumcots, apriums, sweeties), and quail, its tourism sector is equally lucrative. Because of the stunning estates built by the old merchant lords (the *Chiarni*), the duchy serves as a premier vacation destination for the nobility of Lower Alba during the warmer months.

Law & Government

The political teeth of Rowan have been systematically pulled. Originally a monarchy, it became a Chiarni Republic, was conquered via a brutal Tariff War, and became a *swyg* (bubble) territory. Emperor Torres var Emreis finally reduced it to a standard duchy to curb its power. Today, an Emperor-appointed Duke rules supreme. The formerly mighty Chiarni families are relegated to a purely consultative "Ducal Senate," possessing wealth but zero geopolitical power.

Military History

Rowan rarely fields massive armies today. Its most notable recent contribution was during the First Northern War, where it sent light horsemen (the Cefnforol Division) and a cadre of powerful mages to fight at Sodden Hill.

Regional Bestiary & Plot Hooks

Rowan's deep valleys and extreme weather create perfect lairs for unique and dangerous beasts.

- **Endemic Monsters:** The duchy is plagued by *Glasthins* (massive auroch-like beasts), *Gefos* (horse-sized mongooses), *Bugganes* (hyper-aggressive ogres), and *Arkasònes* (spiked, hulking predators). The skies hide *Adhenes* (winged predators similar to harpies), and the waters conceal the deadly *Cabbylush* (a vicious lunar kelpie).
- **Cursed Ones & Specters:** Therianthropy in Rowan rarely manifests as werewolves; instead, victims suffer from *pantherthropy* (were-panthers) and *kaprostropy* (were-boars). In the mist-shrouded valleys, genderless *hillwraiths* and massive, camouflaged green *archespores* hunt unwary travelers.

Campaign Hooks

- **The Chiarni's Gambit:** A wealthy but politically castrated Chiarni lord hires the party to escort a caravan of highly illegal, un-taxed mandrake seeds out of the province. They must evade the Duke's guards, the Nilfgaardian military, and the lethal *Arkasònes* that roam the highland passes.
- **The Donkey's Belly:** The party is hired as bodyguards for a wealthy Nilfgaardian noble vacationing in Rowan. But winter arrives early, the Rowawin freezes, and the "donkey's belly" traps them at an isolated estate. As

food dwindles, a pack of *Cabbyluses* begins hunting the guests under the moonlight.

- **The Traitor of Sodden:** Isbel aep Muir Moss, a legendary Rowani mage who abandoned the Nilfgaardian cause after the Slaughter of Cintra, has supposedly returned home to hide. The Imperial *Streicwyr* (bounty hunters) have locked down Darn Rowan, and the party must decide whether to turn her in for a massive bounty or help her escape into the Tir Tochair mountains.

Notable Locations

- **Darn Rowan:** The capital city. A fortress town built over the ashes of the old merchant capital, Chaarowain. It features a massive, proud monument dedicated to the Rowani mages who fell at Sodden Hill.
- **Lough Airh (Golden Lake):** A semi-saline inland lake that famously refuses to freeze during the brutal winters, making it a hub of activity and fishing when the rest of the duchy shuts down.
- **The Row Awin (Line River):** The lifeblood river that splits into four branches before rejoining, shaping the fertile valleys and serving as the primary trade artery for the region.

Citizens & Factions of Interest

Notable Figures

- **Isbel aep Muir Moss:** A powerful lower Albanian/Rowani sorceress. Formerly a hero of the Empire, she defected after witnessing Nilfgaardian atrocities and is now hunted globally as a traitor.
- **The Chiarni:** Though not a single person, these ancient merchant families act as a collective aristocracy. They are perpetually plotting to reclaim their lost economic monopolies through legal loopholes and shadow investments.

Factions

- **The Ducal Senate:** A toothless advisory board made up of the Chiarni. While they have no military power, their vast wealth allows them to manipulate

the service guilds, carriers, and moneylenders of the region.

- **The Gnomish Overseers:** A tightly knit guild of gnomes who practically run the agricultural day-to-day of Rowan. Upsetting them means a total halt to the mandrake and quail trades.
- **The Streicwyr:** Nilfgaard's elite bounty hunters and secret police, acting as the southern equivalent of the Nordling Praetorship.

GM Note

In a Witcher TTRPG campaign, Rowan provides a massive tonal shift from the mud and misery of the Northern Realms. It is a place of high society, polite smiles, and breathtaking vistas—but it is entirely claustrophobic in its imperial control. Use the oppressive heat of the summer and the suffocating gray "donkey's belly" of the winter to make the players feel trapped. The monsters here are highly unique, allowing you to throw seasoned players off-balance, and the political intrigue should rely on corporate espionage and economic leverage rather than open warfare.



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